

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY EUR/WE:EJBBIGEL:VE

APPROVED BY EUR/WE:WHMARSH

NAVY/PME 119 - MR. N.HERBERT

PM/ISO - CAPT. M.PASZTALANIEC

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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TAGS: MARR, FR

SUBJECT: OMEGA NAVIGATION STATION

REF: PARIS 23412 AND 28986

NAVY FOR COMNAVELECSYSCOM/PME-119

1. THE BASIS FOR THE STATEMENT IN STATE 214050 ABOUT EQUAL SHARING OF CONSTRUCTION COSTS WAS A LETTER FROM CAPTAIN LAGET, CHIEF OF THE SECTION MARINE OF THE MISSION TECHNIQUE DE L'ARMAMENT AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY HERE, DATED OCTOBER 1, 1969, TO OMEGA PROJECT OFFICE. LETTER REFERRED TO AN OCTOBER 16 MEETING AT WHICH GENERAL BONTE OF THE DELEGATION MINISTERIELLE POUR L'ARMAMENT HANDED THE DRAFT OMEGA AGREEMENT TO ADMIRAL RUCKNER, AND WENT ON TO STATE: "THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND A DEFINITIVE COMMITMENT WERE SUBJECT TO TWO CONDITIONS: THE STATION WILL BE UNDER FRENCH SOVEREIGNTY AND THE FRENCH SHARE OF THE STATION COST WILL BE NO MORE THAN 50 PERCENT. IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT BOTH OF THEM WERE AGREED UPON BY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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U.S. NAVY." WE ARE POUCHING A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO THE

EMBASSY AS WELL AS AN OMEGA PROJECT OFFICE BACKGROUND PAPER WHICH SUGGESTS THAT THE COSTS TO THE U.S. OF THE TOWER EQUIPMENT HAVE ESCALATED GREATLY SO THAT THE U.S. SHARE OF THE COST OF INSTALLING THE REUNION OMEGA STATION MAY AMOUNT

TO TWO-THIRDS RATHER THAN HALF OF THE OVERALL TOTAL ORIGINALLY CONTEMPLATED.

2. WE ARE ALSO POUCHING A COPY OF A LETTER DATED JULY 9, 1974, FROM THE OMEGA PROJECT OFFICE TO CAPTAIN DE GABIOLE OF THE DMA, WHO IS IN CHARGE ON THE FRENCH SIDE, INDICATING THE BEST POSSIBLE DELIVERY DATES FOR THE EQUIPMENT BEING PROVIDED BY THE U.S. THESE ARE THE SAME DATES LATER RECONFIRMED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN THE EMBASSY AIDE-MEMOIRE OF OCTOBER 2. WE ARE ALSO POUCHING A REPLY OF JULY 31 FROM DE GABIOLE INSISTING THAT THE U.S. ADVANCE THE APRIL 30 AND JUNE 30, 1975 DELIVERY DATES TO APRIL 15 AND JUNE 15.

3. IT APPEARS TO US THAT THE FRENCH PROJECT OFFICER IS MAKING A MAJOR ISSUE OUT OF TWO WEEKS IN A CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM WHICH INVOLVES 26 WEEKS. WE UNDERSTAND FROM THE NAVY THAT THE ORIGINAL DELAY IN DELIVERY DATES WAS DUE TO THE SHORT SUPPLY OF SPECIAL STEEL FOR FABRICATION OF THE TOWER EQUIPMENT. SUPPLIES ARE NOW PLENTIFUL BUT THE FABRICATION PERIOD CANNOT BE REALISTICALLY CONDENSED BECAUSE OF SPECIAL FABRICATION REQUIREMENTS WHICH CANNOT BE ACCELERATED SIMPLY THROUGH APPLICATION OF ADDITIONAL LABOR. ON THE OTHER HAND THE FRENCH AIDE-MEMOIRE OF LAST MAY 20 INDICATES THAT THEY ARE ALLOWING TWO WEEKS OUT OF THEIR 26 TO MOVE THE MATERIALS FROM THE DOCKS AT REUNION INLAND FIVE MILES TO THE CONSTRUCTION SITE. THIS PERIOD WOULD APPEAR THE BEST ONE FOR SOME COMPRESSION IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THE INSTALLATION BEFORE NOVEMBER 15, WHICH IS ASSUMED TO BE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE HURRICANE SEASON. WE UNDERSTAND, INCIDENTALLY, THAT HURRICANES HAVE NOT IN FACT MATERIALIZED AT THIS EARLY A DATE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS.

4. IT REMAINS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE ISSUE OF THE TWO WEEKS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS WELL AS THE ISSUE OF INCREASED COSTS TO THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, ARE BEING EMPHASIZED AS PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OR WHETHER THE FRENCH HAVE SOME OTHER REASON TO BURY THE OMEGA AGREEMENT THEY SIGNED ON JUNE 7, 1973. THIS CURIOSITY IS ALSO FED BY (A) THE INITIAL ABSENCE OF ANY CLEAR EXPLANATION WHY THE GOF FELT COMPELLED TO SEEK PARLIAMENTARY RATIFICATION OF THIS EXECUTIVE AGREEMENT AND BY (B) THE APPARENT SLOWNESS IN THE COURSE OF THE LEGIS-

LATIVE PROCEDURES SINCE MID-1973 TOWARD RATIFICATION OF A PROJECT THAT WE HAD THOUGHT THE FRENCH CONSIDERED TO BE IN THEIR INTEREST THROUGH PROVIDING A SECTOR OF THIS WORLDWIDE VLF SYSTEM FOR MARINE AND AIRCRAFT NAVIGATION. THIS WAS INDICATED BY THE GOF IN ITS EXPOSE DES MOTIFS DESCRIBING

THE AGREEMENT TO PARLIAMENT.

5. THE MARTINIQUE BRIEFING BOOK WILL EXPLAIN TO OUR PRINCIPALS THAT WE AWAIT FRENCH RATIFICATION OF THE OMEGA AGREEMENT BUT WILL NOT PROPOSE RAISING THE SUBJECT ON THIS OCCASION. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE AMBASSADOR TO INDICATE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON SOME SUITABLE OCCASION IN PARIS OUR CURIOSITY AS TO WHY THIS SUBJECT HAS APPARENTLY BECOME SUCH A PROBLEM WITHIN THE FRENCH POLITICAL SYSTEM SINCE JUNE 1973, QUITE ASIDE FROM THE QUESTION OF COSTS AND DELIVERY SCHEDULES.

6. IF FRANCE IS UNABLE TO RATIFY THE OMEGA AGREEMENT THIS WOULD PRESUMABLY LEAD TO CANCELLATION OF THE DELIVERY OF U.S. EQUIPMENT TO REUNION AND THE FAILURE OF THE PROJECT. WE WOULD VERY MUCH REGRET THIS. IT IS UNCLEAR HOWEVER WHETHER THIS MAY BE THE RESULT FAVORED AT POLITICAL LEVELS OUTSIDE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, OR WHETHER THE LEGISLATIVE DELAY IS ONLY AN ABERRATION. KISSINGER

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